

Message Text

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67

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 DRC-01 SSO-00 CCO-00 NSCE-00

/124 W

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R 072210Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0439

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 9028

E O 11652; GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IS

SUBJECT: UNCERTAIN STATE OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION
IN ISRAEL

1. ISRAELI PARLIAMENTARIANS, LIKE GENERAL PUBLI, REMAIN ANXIOUS AND UNCERTAIN ABOUT GOVT'S ABILITY TO WITHSTAND WHAT THEY SEE AS PROSPECTIVE US PRESSURES IN DAYS AHEAD, BUT CURRENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT MEIR GOVT RETAINS STRENGTH TO CARRY COALITION WITH IT IN KNESSET ON DIFFICULT DECISIONS WHICH IT MAY HAVE TO TAKE IN IMMEDIATE FUTURE. WHILE MRS MEIR IS UNDER CONSIDERABLE DOMESTIC PRESSURE TO SHOW THAT SHE HAS NOT SIMPLY CAVED IN TO US DURING HER WASHINGTON TRIP, INFORMED POLITICAL OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT MRS MEIR RETAINS CONFIDENCE OF LABOR ALIGNMENT AND SUFFICIENT STRENGTH TO MUSTER SUPPORT OF NATIONAL RELIGIOUS AND INDEPENDENT LIBERAL COALITION PARTNERS IN CRUNCH DECISIONS. SEVERAL KNESSET MEMBERS ENCOMPASSING BROAD SPECTRUM OF VIEWS WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED IN PAST TWO DAYS DO NOT ANTICIPATE GOVT CRISIS, JUDGING BY THEIR CONTINUING FOCUS ON IMPACT OF PRESENT SITUATION ON UPCOMING ELECTION ALMOST TWO MONTHS AWAY AND NOT ON ANY IMMINENT BATTLES FOR VOTES IN KNESSET.

2. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT LEADERS OF AGGRESSIVE OPPOSITION LIKUD
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BLOC, AFTER HEARING MRS MEIR'S REPORT ON HER WASHINGTON

TRIP IN CONFIDENTIAL SESSION OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE NOV 6, THEN AGREED TO HER REQUEST FOR POST-PONEMENT OF HER REPORT TO KNESSET FROM NOV 7 TO NOV 12. LIKUD'S AGREEMENT IN ALL LIKELIHOOD DOES NOT STEM FROM ANTICIPATION THAT KISSINGER VISIT TO MID EAST LIKELY TO PRODUCE SIGNIFICANT NEW DEVELOPMENTS FAVORABLE TO ISRAEL. IT SEEMS RATHER TO HAVE BEEN COURTESY EXTENDED TO HER PERSONALLY. NONETHLESS IT IS SIGN OF MRS MEIR'S POLITICAL STRENGTH THAT IN PRESENT TENSE SITUATION SHE CAN DEFER DISCUSSION OF HER WASHINGTON TRIP FOR A WEEK AFTER HER RETURN WITH AGREEMENT OF OPPOSITION.

3. DESPITE ATMOSPHERE OF UNCERTAINTY AND ANXIETY, THERE ARE ALSO A FEW SIGNS OF POTENTIAL FLEXIBILITY EMERGING ON ISRAELI POLITICAL SCENE. ONE DEVELOPMENT IS DE-EMPHASIS IN PUBLIC STATEMENT BY RIGHT-WING ELEMENTS OF THEIR PAST EXTREMIST POSITIONS OPPOSING ANY WITHDRAWAL FROM TERRITORIES, ALTHOUGH THIS MAY ONLY BE TACTICAL. ADDITIONAL SIGN IS REEVALUATION OF SEVERAL HERETOFORE UNCONTROVERSIAL AXIOMS REGARDING GOI'S PROSPECTIVE NEGOTIATING POSITION. SOME ISRAELIS ARE BEGINNING FOR EXAMPLE TO QUESTION PUBLICLY WHETHER RETENTION OF SHARM-EL-SHEIKH IS ABSOLUTELY INDISPENSABLE OR EVEN MEANINGFUL FOR ISRAEL'S SECURITY IN VIEW OF ARAB ABILITY TO BLOCKADE BAB-EL-MANDEB. NRP KNESSET MEMBER TOLD US THAT HIS FACTION WITHIN NRP, WHICH IN PAST HAS BEEN HARDLINE ON SUCH ISSUES, IS RECEPTIVE TO IDEA OF GOI-GOE NEGOTIATIONS OVER FUTURE OF SINAI, INCLUDING DEMILITARIZATION, GOI ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF EGYPTIAN SOVEREIGNTY OVER ENTIRE SINAI, AND ISRAELI RETENTION OF CERTAIN AREAS FOR SPECIFIED NUMBER OF YEARS. MOREOVER, HE BELIEVED THAT VIABLE SETTLEMENT WAS POSSIBLE IF SADAT WAS NOT OVERWHELMED BY EXTREMIST ARAB PRESSURES RESULTING FOR EXAMPLE FROM PAN-ARAB SUMMIT.

4. COMMENT: AT THIS JUNCTURE, PUBLIC SEEMS SLIGHTLY SCHIZOPHRENIC, ON ONE HAND FEARFUL THAT GOI WILL BE TRICKED INTO FATEFUL CONCESSIONS, AND ON OTHER HAND DESIROUS OF GIVING NEGOTIATING PROSPECT A CHANCE RATHER THAN FACE FIFTH ARAB-ISRAELI WAR IN NEXT SEVERAL YEARS. WHETHER SCALE WILL TIP IN DIRECTION OF INWARD-TURNING, SULLEN INTRANSIGENCE OR OPENESS TO NEGOTIATIONS REMAINS TO BE SEEN AND, AS SO MANY OTHER THINGS, CONFIDENTIAL

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WILL BE LARGELY DETERMINED BY RESULTS OF SECRETARY'S CURRENT TRIP.
KEATING

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